vigilance and sustained pressure and operations against the militants by the security forces; focussed steps to accelerate economic and development activities and creation of additional employment opportunities for the youth; special attention to reactivation of the local administration bringing it closer to the people and restoration of the peoples' confidence in it; increased transparency and other measures like release of detenues etc. to relieve tension among the people; efforts to reactivate and encourage the political forces in the State; and an expression of Government's openness to dialogue with any person/ group who may be willing to cooperate towards the restoration of peace and normalcy in the State. All these efforts have had a definite positive impact and the Government will continue to pursue them intensively and consolidate the situation further.

Technical Expertise of District Rural Development Agencies

1797. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the poor technical knowhow with the District Rural Development Agencies in the country;

(b) whether there is a need to strengthen the technical manpower and knowhow in order to ensure qualitative implementation of rural development programmes;

(c) if so, the Central assistance proposed to be provided to the State Governments for the purpose; and

(d) the steps taken to revitalise rural development programmes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI UTAMBHAI PATEL): (a) to (d) For strengthening the implementing machinery at DRDA's level, Cabinet Secretary has recently written to all Chief Secretaries suggesting some measures in this regard, which interali includes the following points relating to technical aspects:—

(i) There should be an additional Project Director and technical/ support staff exclusively for Rural Employment Works. The Additional Project Director should be a technical person of the rank of an Executive Engineer or even a superintending Engineer in the case of DRDA receiving very large allocations.

(ii) The Technical Wing, either in the DRDA or in the Zilla Parishad, should also be adequately strengthened. Many districts receiving substantial allocations (Rs.40—50 crores) are handling such programmes with the assistance of only two or three Junior Engineers and Assistant Engineers. This is woefully inadequate, Depending upon the circumstances and the requirements, one or more Executive Engineers(s) alongwith supporting staff, should be posted to the DRDA/Zilla Parishads, if necessary through redeployment from existing engineering departments of the State Government. The constitution of a separate Rural Engineering Cadre to implement rural development programmes could also be explored. Following a detailed redeployment exercise and depending upon the requirements, the Government of India would be willing to share costs for deploying additional technical staff.